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Groundwater and air testing are next at Iron Horse Park

By Cate Chapman

As trash from the asbestos landfill capping operation is cleared away from Ironhorse Park, plans for a \$770,000 Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RIFS) of the 1,280 acre industrial park, a national Superfund site, are getting underway.

Four eroding asbestos landfills, totalling about 19 acres in area, have been recapped with 12 inches of gravel, 18 inches of topsoil and seeded; almost a dozen drums containing asbestos and chemical substances have been safely disposed of.

According to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) On-Site Coordinator for the project, Robert Ankstittus, results of final air monitoring tests for the carcinogenic asbestos performed in buildings in the park, 14 nearby residences and around the landfills, indicate no hazard.

"It was a lot of work in a short amount of time," said Ankstittus of the two-month project, completed just before its Nov. 1 deadline but about \$140,000 above a projected cost of \$960,000.

Three additional landfills, comprising about four acres in area, and the drums, discovered after the project was underway, were not part of the initial equation.

A work plan for the RIFS should be available for public comment by mid December, said EPA Environmental Engineer Richard Leighton, and will outline tests for groundwater, surface water, soil and air contaminants in the park.

"The bulk of our effort will focus on groundwater, surface water and soil contamination," said Leighton. "The biggest unknown is the groundwater. It's the toughest to get a handle on."

Leighton said air monitoring tests would be geared towards those abandoned or uncontrolled hazardous waste sites in the park that are within the jurisdiction of the Superfund law.

Tests would most likely be designed to detect Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) such as Benzene, Vinyl Chloride, and Toluene and any other substances that "would traditionally be found there or that might be there" as a result of past dumping practices, he said.

Testing would include, but no longer focus on, asbestos.

He said, however, that now that the landfills had been successfully capped, with no sign of airborne asbestos, he doubted that much contamination from hazardous waste sites would be found in the air.

"The air monitoring is not designed to deal with active industries," he said. "We are not trying to find out if they are in compliance with their [state and federal discharge] permits."

"Of course, we could be sampling merrily away and detect something attributable to active industries," he said. "If we find a problem or a potential problem we will turn it over to the appropriate state or federal authority."

Since tests would be designed to detect specific chemical compounds, or classes of compounds, "it is unlikely, but possible that something that was not screened for testing is there. If the tests are negative, we can say with a reasonable amount of confidence that there is no air pollution."